

Editors Column

What Are Gen Z's Favorite Trader Joe's Snacks?



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The Takis, fried rice, chips, and cookie butter were some of the most popular items that my friends told me to check out at Trader Joe's.

[Source: Author, Isleen Lee]

If there is anything Generation Z enjoys, it is a good snack that fulfills the annoyingly stubborn late-night craving. Consisting of those born between 1997 and 2012 (according to Beresford

Research), this group of young adults and teenagers form a society bonded by sharing their takes on viral and new snacks. As a part of Gen Z myself, sharing the names of delicious treats or newly released food items has become a routine that I often experience with my friends. Within the past few years, as I grew further into my teenage years, I noticed that one particular grocery store is the hotspot of snacks for many other teens. This grocery store is none other than Trader Joe's!

My first encounter with Trader Joe's dates back a few years, when I was in middle school. Known for selling foods that are more organic and healthy than the general pool of grocery stores, Trader Joe's felt like an entirely new concept to me. It didn't have as many aisles as a normal market did, and the layout of the store looked much more creative than others.

Most importantly, they didn't sell any external brands that weren't their own, which made the first experience feel even more surreal and compact. I quickly noticed the variety of snacks and produce they sold, however, and immediately told myself to tag along with my mom whenever she would pay the store a visit.

After the school year ended, I realized that even though I had seen a wide range of Trader Joe's items in my friends' lunches and school in the general sense, I had never asked anyone what their favorite item from the store was. Summer break had just started and as a typical Gen Z would do, I asked many of my friends on social media to send the name of their favorite Trader Joe's items. The results included deserts, main meals, dairy products, and other miscellaneous foods, some of which I had never heard of,

despite my frequent trips to the store. This allowed me to try out new items and give them taste tests and personal, completely subjective ratings for fun. After compiling a list of 23 of the best foods using the responses, I noticed that the most popular snacks were the Chili & Lime Flavored Rolled Corn Tortilla Chips, better known as the "Trader Joe's Takis," and the cookie butter from the baked goods section. Both were items I had never seen at the store before, so on my next, I picked out a few of these and gave them a try.

It is definitely safe to say that the Takis, cookie butter, as well as the Japanese Style Fried Rice are all delicious. Going to Trader Joe's with a mission to search for these items made the previously routine experience feel more fun, and I look forward to doing something similar again!

Student Reporter

It All Started with "Spanish or Vanish": Duolingo's Marketing Expertise

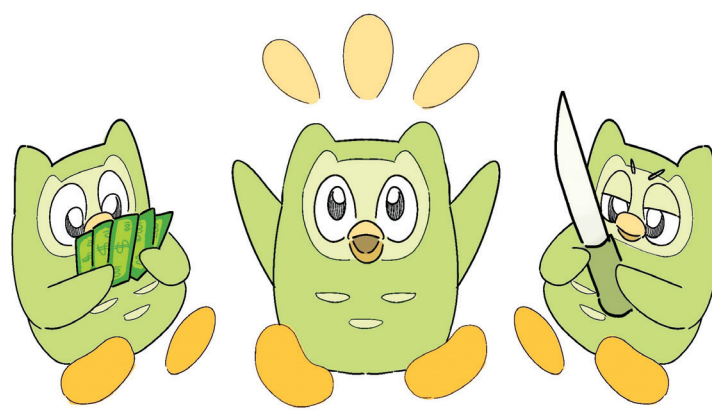


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When having the privilege of being the head of publicity for a large company, one would likely expect to oversee the production of professional social media posts that highlight product updates or app features; however, in recent years, individuals in these positions have normalized posting short videos with single images, overwhelming "audios," and references to out-of-place characters in the hopes of addressing the coming generation's seemingly random humor. Companies have always had a difficult time appealing to younger generations, as their humor seems to be fleeting and intangible. Many found the solution to be easier than initially thought with Generation Z. Companies that have adapted to the rather absurd, nonsense humor of Generation Z have found a jackpot in social media marketing.

One app's social media page, Duolingo, is filled with such content: feigned infatuations with random celebrities, unhinged depictions of its mascots, and under-the-radar inside jokes. Duolingo has been recognized as a free language learning app that offers high-quality lessons



Duolingo's publicity teams have utilized its iconic owl mascot in various ways to attract younger generations and successfully get new users.

[Source: Author, Audrey Park]

and employs informal social media posts to address its younger users. These posts pop up across several platforms, such as TikTok or Instagram, in the form of short content and include references to trends and pop-culture symbols.

For companies like Duolingo, this marketing may have come automatically through content that the audiences and younger generations themselves create. A few years back, a user may have associated Wendy's burgers and fries with crude Twitter posts, where its social media accounts could be

found starting lighthearted banter with rival fast-food franchises. Prior to this, when various Twitter users popularized one snarky post that a Wendy's employee made, the company's publicity team devoted themselves to making entertaining beef with Wendy's haters and rival companies to create marketing leverage against competitors. Using Medium, Justin Thorne reported the statistics of Wendy's financial growth immediately after the peak of this attention by writing, "[the posts] proved to be an ingenious marketing move by Wendy's as

their net income increased from \$129.6 million to \$194 million." A similar thing happened with Duolingo's mascot. A few years ago, the internet placed an ominous presence behind the owl, urging others to believe that the bird would come and find their family if they did not finish your daily language lessons. Most youth remember the phrase, "Spanish or vanish." Now, when scrolling through Duolingo's catalog of Instagram posts, a user will find depictions of their signature, highlighter-green mascot acting borderline psychotic to encourage completion of lessons alongside genuine content that formally showcases new features of the app. It's no coincidence either, as it seems that the stark contrast between professional posts and playful ones highlights the self-awareness of the publicity team, which only humors audiences even more.

As companies fight to get a firmer hold on younger generations, these informal methods of generating short-form content may need to be integrated into marketing practices.

Student Reporter

Trending Products: Yay or Nay?



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The rise of social media platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, is fueling our overconsumption more than ever. We began with the Stanley cups and have now moved on to overhyped beauty products. Individuals at risk of falling into these consumption traps can be teenagers notorious for "doom scrolling" on these apps daily. The amount of information and advertisements teenagers get from this content is immense, and it is reflected in today's trends in beauty products.

Sephora has long been known for supplying needy customers with the right makeup and skincare products they need. After influencers began filming "Sephora hauls" and posting them on their social media profiles, more people began to buy the products. Some of these products include the Glow Recipe Dew Drops, numerous lip oils and

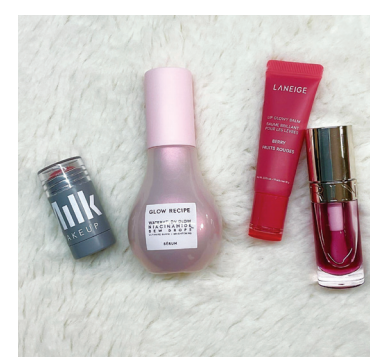
balms, and popular blush. However, the real problem is, how do you know if these products are a good fit for you?

The Glow Recipe Dew Drops are deserving of their branding. They are known for their glow and hydration, which reflect on many customers' skin. These watermelon niacinamide drops smell wonderful and works great on most skin. Another product that does deserve to be trending is the Summer Fridays lip balm. People rave about these lip balms, and they do deserve to be hyped up. Many praise the minimalist-yet appealing packaging as well as the formula, which is known for its hydration and beautiful tint.

However, some of these products are less than satisfactory. Consumers have many issues with products such as Rhode lip balm, which was recently highlighted for its grainy

texture. While lip balms are supposed to be smooth and moisturizing for your lips, customers have reported Rhode's lip balms to do the complete opposite. Many speculate that it may be because they incorrectly stored the lip balm, but it should be the company's responsibility to make products that do not change under normal circumstances. On the other hand, Milk Makeup was receiving constant backlash for its small containers and high prices, which make its products the opposite of cost-efficient. Not only is it small, but many are not satisfied with how the product blends into the skin, although they are labeled as nicely working blushes. There were many complaints about products like these, suggesting that it may be time to go back to the lab!

A constant stream of information and advertisements about



Some of the most popular products that teenagers like to use nowadays are ones trending on social media.

[Source: Author, Angel Song]

various items floods our social media pages every day. One of the most common content targeted at teenagers is about beauty products, whether it may be makeup or skincare items. However, it's important to note that not all of these products are as good in reality as they sound like on social media and that checking reviews may be helpful after all!

Editors Column

Expectations vs. Reality: the Detriments of Tourism



Alexis Choi
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The Bean (Cloud Gate) is a tourist hotspot in Chicago that recently reopened after renovations!



Although some things might not live up to their online hype, you won't be disappointed by the stunning architecture in Chicago! [Source: Author, Alexis Choi]

You spend months gorging yourself on clips of the stunning Chicago skyline. You've scrolled through too many blog posts that rhapsodize over Nighthawks at the Art Institute of Chicago. Glossy photos of The Bean have permeated your Instagram feed, and you've never had a stronger craving for deep-dish pizza. At this point, your expectations are higher than the 103rd floor of the Willis Tower. You're prepared to

experience the best of this city—you're ready to be impressed.

When you arrive, it isn't exactly what you expected. The streets are roiling with people, and the city air is a suffocating blend of car exhaust and cigarette smoke. You're confused—it seems that all the viral images of The Bean forgot to include the throngs of people teeming around the statue, jostling for photos. They didn't capture the sweaty fingers, leaving ghostly marks on

every inch of the silver surface. At dinner, the deep-dish pizza is a tangle of hardening cheeses and drippy marinara. It's also \$35 for a medium pie. At the museums, you barely catch a glimpse of the acclaimed Nighthawks before your view is obstructed by all the angsty art boys trying to take photos that emanate their particular sad-and-slightly-pretentious-but-in-a-cool-and-artistic-way energy.

Of course, not everything is awful. The city is filled with breathtaking architecture, each skyscraper more beautiful than the last. The pizza—though not the glorious cheesy goodness you saw on TikTok—is almost as good, if not better, than your average Dominoes. The view of the sunset from the 103rd floor is a glorious real-life rendition of the O'Keeffe paintings you viewed at the special exhibit in the Art Institute. The underbelly of The Bean, too, is quite charming.

It's not that the city is a dump. In fact, Chicago is quite beautiful. But oversaturated, professionally-taken-and-Photoshopped depictions of the city that are so widespread

have cultivated such colorful mental images that one can't help but be baffled by the greyer reality. The same phenomenon occurs in all tourist hotspots: New York, Los Angeles, London—Paris, especially, which is known to be so disappointing that tourists suffer physical consequences called "Paris Syndrome."

When one has no idea what to expect from a travel destination, it's more likely that they will find themselves intrigued and impressed by all that a city has to offer, rather than unconsciously measuring everything against pre-cultivated standards of comparison. Travel is not about visiting perfect destinations, though tourists and media have made it so. Travel is messy and uncontrollable, but also exciting and eye-opening. It's unexpected and unexpectedly beautiful. This is what people should expect.

Tourism undoubtedly has its benefits, but one must wonder what traveling would be like if everyone could just be pleasantly surprised—or rightfully disappointed—by experiences untainted by the influences of others.

Student Reporter

Sleep or Study: An Overlooked Debate



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Sleep is often overlooked by teenagers as the stress of school activities intensifies, leaving no room for leisure. Many at this age are faced with a choice between sacrificing sleep for schoolwork or sacrificing productive time for more rest. Unfortunately, most teenagers fail to recognize the importance of sleep in daily life and stay up late, utilizing their rest time to study. In fact, studies show that 73% of teenagers lack sleep on a daily basis. Because of school and/or extracurricular activities, sleep has become considered a "waste of time" or deemed unnecessary for crucial performance.

However, such a belief is far from the truth. Sleep contributes to many aspects of our well-being, and having an abundance of sleep is one of the most beneficial things for the human body. Not only does it reduce stress, but sleep also helps improve learning and problem-solving skills. According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, sleep-deprived students



Although it may seem better to stay up studying, getting a good night's rest is more beneficial in the long run. [Source: Zillow]

tend to have more difficulty paying attention, harnessing creativity, and making decisions. Further research has proven that sleep also boosts your immune system and provides a healthy balance of hormones, which is extremely significant for teenagers. Cognitive functions are important, but maintaining a healthy growth pattern is also necessary, which hormones support.

Although school can be pressuring, with mounds of tests that

students have to study hours for, it is important to realize that getting enough sleep to perform well on the test is as important as memorizing the study material. 16-year-old student Simon Yu claims he has found it easier to work in both school and sports after adopting a healthy and consistent sleep cycle: "I think my reaction time got way faster, and I feel a lot more awake all the time. I remember a lot more, too, like when I study for tests." This is not a placebo

effect or a coincidence. Sleep also helps with memorization, as your brain constantly replays information you learned throughout the day during REM cycles. REM stands for rapid eye movement, and REM phases are when your eyes move erratically during your sleep. It is a unique phase where your muscle tones are low throughout your body and is also the period of your sleep when you dream. So basically, you are studying subconsciously during your slumber!

With modern society's normalization of sleep deprivation in a student's life, it is difficult to realize how sacrificing sleep for academics or extra activities is more harmful than many understand and will lead to health problems in the future. Another difficult task is fixing an unhealthy sleep schedule, but with enough effort, it can be done. So the next time you find yourself choosing between an all-nighter study session and sufficient sleep, tuck yourself in and turn off the lamp for your own well-being.

Student Reporter

Choose Your First Set of Wheels



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Grade 12
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Have you thought about your first car? Or are you considering getting your first car? If so, there are a lot of things to think about. How much will it cost? Do I want something new and flashy, or do I want something more reliable and safe? With so many choices on the market, it can be hard to decide which is best for the new beginning driver. Here are some detailed rankings for each of the popular choices for beginners' cars to help you make a decision.

Honda Civic

The first car to consider is the Honda Civic, which is one of the most popular car choices among teens who have just received their driver's license. The sporty and sharp design attracts many of its first car buyers. It's fuel-efficient,

stylish, and fun to drive, making this car one of the top choices for first-time car owners. A brand new 2024 Honda Civic has a price range of \$25,000 - \$32,000, which is affordable for what it offers, but there are much cheaper options if you are considering used versions.

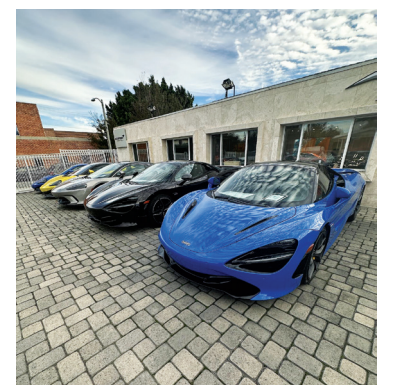
Toyota Prius

Also known as a great first car choice for beginners, the Toyota Prius is a good option for anyone who wants to maximize their value in cars. Known for its high fuel economy, it is favored amongst new drivers who are looking for a car with the most value. The 2024 Toyota Prius has a starting price of \$29,000 - \$32,000, with much more affordable options if one is looking at older models.

Subaru BRZ

When looking at the best value for a sports car, you should take a look at the Subaru BRZ. With its amazing performance and at very affordable prices, the Subaru BRZ will provide you with the best lively-sport experience. Well known for its stylish, sporty design, this car will treat you well as your first car choice. The 2024 Subaru BRZ has a starting price of \$31,000 - \$36,000, which is a little more expensive, but it is worth every dollar.

All of these choices are good, and each has its own pros and cons. Overall, I would prefer getting the Subaru BRZ just because I would like to have some speed and excitement while driving my car. I think that the Subaru BRZ is a great choice for those who are



Getting your first car is exciting! Make sure you get the one that is best for you! [Source: Author, David Kim]

looking for speed and thrill riding their first car. But if that is not your desire, all of the options above are great for first-time car owners. One thing I would advise is getting what makes you happy and comfortable while driving and taking lots of pictures with your new car!